

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IGA-02 L-03 H-02 SP-02 AID-05 EB-07

NSC-05 CIEP-01 TRSE-00 SS-15 STR-04 OMB-01 CEA-01

CIAE-00 COME-00 FRB-03 INR-07 NSAE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03

LAB-04 SIL-01 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00 SSO-00 IO-11

PA-01 PRS-01 /088 W

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O R 161543Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8034

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 0081

ABIDJAN FOR REDSO; NIAMEY FOR RDO

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID, PFOR, DM, US

SUBJ: GSP AND HICKENLOOPER AMENDMENT

REF A - COTONOU 0066, B - STATE 1030,

1. FORNMIN ALLADAYE FINALLY GRANTED ME AUDIENCE TODAY THAT I REQUESTED BY NOTE 3 DEC AND AGAIN BY NOTE JAN 14. THOUGH ALWAYS BEFORE OF SUNNY DISPOSITION IN HIS TALKS WITH ME, ON THIS OCCASION HE WAS UNFRIENDLY TO THE POINT OF BEING RUDE, AS WELL AS GENERALLY UNRESPONSIVE WHEN I PUT QUESTIONS TO HIM.

2. I SUMMARIZED OUR EARLIER CONVERSATIONS RE GSP, WHICH HE SAID HE RECALLED. I SAID I HAD ALSO TALKED TO FINANCE MIN AMOUSSOU AND INDUSTRY/COMMERCE MIN ATCHADE. AND WE HAD EXPALINED THE GSP PROBLEM IN TWO NOTES, WHICH REQUESTED INFO REGARDING THE WORK OF THE INDEMNIFICATION COMMISSIONS. UNDER INSTRUCTIONS WE HAD BEEN SEEKING EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS
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TOWARD INDEMNIFICATION, BUT COULD FIND NONE FROM ANY SOURCE.

THE SPECIAL WASHINGTON COMMITTEE ON THE SUBJECT HAD NOW DELIBERATED, AND WE BELIEVED BENIN WAS LIKELY TO BE DROPPED FROM THE LIST OF COUNTRIES ELIGIBLE FOR GSP. HOWEVER, IT WAS NEVER TOO LATE TO GET MOVING ON THE QUESTION OF COMPENSATION. WAS THERE ANYTHING HE COULD DO TO PUT LIFE INTO THE INDEMNIFICATION COMMISSION ON THE OIL COMPANIES? WAS THERE ANYTHING I COULD REPORT TO WASHINGTON? HE CONSULTED CAKPO (DIR OF WEST EUROPEAN/NORTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS), WHO WAS TAKING NOTES. CAKPO INTIMATED THAT A NOTE WAS BEING PREPARED ON THE SUBJECT. IT HAD TO BE CLEARED WITH OTHER MINISTRIES. MIN SAID WE WOULD HAVE THE NOTE WITHIN NEXT DAY OR SO. HE WOULD NOT SAY WHAT WOULD BE IN IT, OTHER THAN THAT IT WOULD CONTAIN HIS GOVT'S POSITION. HE ADDED, "WE ARE GOING TO PAY. BUT WE EXPECT FRIENDS TO TRUST US." I RESPONDED THAT USG EXPECTED THE SAME; IN FACT OUR ACTIONS TOWARD OTHER COUNTRIES WERE BASED ON THEIR TREATMENT OF US.

3. I EXPLAINED HICKENLOOPER AND GONZALES AMENDMENTS, AND REMINDED HIM THAT BENIN WAS VULNERABLE TO BOTH OF THEM BECAUSE SO MUCH TIME HAD PASSED WITHOUT ANY PROGRESS TOWARD INDEMNIFICATION. IN REPLY TO QUESTIONS, I BRIEFED HIM ON COTONOU BRIDGE/DAM BID, AND ASKED IF HIS GOVT HAD ANYTHING TO CONVEY TO US RE FINANCING, ETC. (HIS ANSWER WAS NEGATIVE).

4. ALLADAYE, GETTING UP WITH THE REMARK THAT HE HAD TO GO TO LUNCH, ASKED ME WHETHER I HAD ANY MORE BUSINESS. I THOUGHT I WAS BEING DISMISSED, SO I SAID NO, THANKED HIM AND PROMISED TO REPORT OUR CONVERSATIONS TO DEPT. HE COULD COUNT ON MY TRANSMITTING THE CONTENTS OF HIS NOTE TO WASHINGTON AS SOON AS IT WAS RECEIVED.

5. HE THEN ASKED ME TO EXPLAIN SECRETARY'S PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT THAT SANCTIONS WOULD BE TAKEN AGAINST A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES INCLUDING BENIN WHO HAD VOTED AGAINST USG AT UN ON PUERTO RICO AND OTHER ISSUES. DID I NOT KNOW THAT THE SECRETARY HAD POINTED A FINGER AT BENIN? I SAID I WAS UNAWARE OF ANY ANNOUNCEMENT BY ANY AMERICAN OFFICIAL ITEMIZING SPECIFIC COUNTRIES, AND I SUGGESTED THAT HE MIGHT BE REFERRING TO PRESS SPECULATION. I COULD ASSURE HIM THAT I WOULD RECEIVE ADVANCE NOTICE OF ANY DECISION INVOLVING BENIN. I NOTED THAT WE HAD HAD PREVIOUS CONFIDENTIAL

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DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE MOOD OF AMERICA IN REGARD TO AID TO COUNTRIES WHOSE GOVTS ATTACKED OUR VITAL INTERESTS AND MADE UNJUST ACCUSATIONS AGAINST US. I INFORMED HIM OF RESULTS OF RECENT POLL WHICH SHOWED THAT AMB MOYNIHAN'S INSISTENCE ON TRUTH AND FAIRNESS AT UN WAS ENDORSED BY FIVE OUT OF EVERY SIX AMERICANS POLLED. WHEN ALLADAYE INSINUATED USG BEING UNFAIR TO BENIN, I SAID WE WEIGHED EVERYTHING IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS AND WE EXPECTED CONFIDENCE AND RESPECT TO BE MUTUAL,

NOT ONE-SIDED. ALLADAYE RETORED THAT HIS GOVT WOULD ALWAYS SPEAK ITS MINDLON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES. IN PARTING I SAID USG SOUGHT NO CONFRONTATION WITH BENIN, ONLY FAIRNESS AND FRIENDLINESS ON MUTUAL BASIS.

5. WE HAD A REPORT YESTERDAY, TO WHICH WE DID NOT AT THE TIME ATTACH ANY CREDENCE (SOURCE IS GENERALLY UNRELIABLE) THAT PRESIDENTIAL ECONOMIC ADVISOR ABOW BABA MOUSSA WAS GIVEN INSTRUCTIONS BY "THE PRESIDENCY" ONLY A DAY OR TWO BEFORE TO REACTIVATE ONE OF THE INDEMNIFICATION COMMISSIONS AND GET SOMETHING DONE QUICKLY.

6. COMMENT: ALL MY EFFORTS TO DRAW ALLADAYE OUT OF HIS SULLENNESS FAILED. JUDGING FROM HIS CONDUCT AND REMARKS, A BOMB HAS SUDDENLY STRUCK BENIN GOVT FROM SOMEWHERE. QUITE LIKELY A CABLE HAS BEEN RECEIVED FROM BENIN EMB IN WASHINGTON CONVEYING WORD THAT AID ACTIVITY RELATING TO COTONOU BRIDGE/DAM HAS CEASED PENDING DECISION ON APPLICATION OF HICKENLOOPER AMENDMENT REF B. WE ALSO SURMISE ALLADAYE HAS JIST OF NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE OF JAN 8 OR 9 ALLEGING THAT SECRETARY HS INITIATED A NEW POLICY OF CUTBACKS IN AID AGAINST CERTAIN COUNTRIES. ALLADAYE'S ATTITUDE CLEARLY SUGGESTS THAT BENIN GOVT NOW FEARFUL THAT IT MIGHT BE IN DANGER OF AID CUTOFF.

7. RECOMMENDATION: THAT HICKENLOOPER AMENDMENT NOT BE APPLIED YET. SINCE BENIN GOVT MAY BE WAKING UP AT LAST, STRONGLY URGE WE EXHAUST POSSIBILITIES OF DIPLOMACY BEFORE INVOKING SUCH HEAVY PENALTIES.
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